

Meeting Gene

(Before beginning, explain to the students there will be a couple of times in the story when you will stop reading to them for a short time. This will give a chance to continue the story in their minds. If they cannot see the story, that is all right, but to just wait with their eyes closed)

Opening:

Before we begin the story, let's get comfortable. The first thing you need to do is to become relaxed. As you are sitting in your chair, think about your body and make adjustments so that your body feels at ease. Make sure your feet are flat on the floor. If your shirt is bunched up, fix it, so you are nice and comfy.

Now put your hands on your stomach just below your bellybutton. Then with deep slow breaths; try to make your stomach rise and lower. Breathe in one, two, three... and breathe out one, two, three... nice and slow. Now close your eyes and continue breathing slowly. It is okay to lay your head down on the desk if that is comfortable, but just keep breathing deeply. (pause) Feel your body sinking into the chair. Your body feels heavy and relaxed. Now in your mind, let my words form pictures. Do not try too hard. Just relax and listen to the words.

You are walking down the hallway with your class. You are looking down at your feet. You see the floor and the shoes of the person in front of you. The class stops. And your teacher points you to an orange door. You hadn't noticed the door before. Your teacher quietly tells you to go through the door. When you leave the line and start to head in your teacher says that Gene the doorman will help you and to have fun. You smile. As you step through the orange door you realize you are outside on a large playground. You run to your favorite thing to play on. As you are using it and having a great time, you hear someone calling your name on the other side of the playground. You start to run that way when you notice a large sandcastle.

In front of the castle is a big teddy bear and he is the one calling your name. As you get closer, you relax because you notice how friendly and kind he is. He tells you how excited he is that your teacher sent you here to play with him and that he has been waiting for you to come and play. You notice

his gentle eyes are brown and soft like melted chocolate. He tells you his name is *Gene*, the Teddy Bear Doorman, and that he works at the castle. He also tells you he has a very important job that he will explain in a little while, but for now, *Gene* says, "let's play". You run back to play on your favorite playground equipment with *Gene*. (pause) He is a lot of fun to play with. (pause)

Then *Gene* runs up to you, taps you on the shoulder and says "Your it!" He turns and runs back towards the castle. You almost catch him when he tumbles to the ground, laughing. You run up to him and tag him laughing, too. *Gene* says, "Now you are ready for some fun!"

As you continue to walk towards the castle the teddy bear doorman says "First, let me tell you about my job." (read slowly) *Gene* explains to you that there are many different adventures you can go on here at the sandcastle. He tells you that to enjoy them it helps to be relaxed and without worries, so part of his job is to hold your *coat of cares* while you are here. You ask, "What is that, my *coat of cares*?" And the teddy bear tells you that you wear your worries like a coat and that weighs you down. If you want to experience all the fun the castle has to offer, you can leave your *coat of cares* with him and pick it back up if you need it when you leave. His eyes are so kind you give his big belly a hug and you take off your *coat of cares* and hand it to him. *Gene* the Teddy Bear Doorman states, "There is nothing to fear. You are always safe here." He smiles at you and says "Hey, that rhymed!" and you smile back at him.

Gene tells you he has a short adventure for you today. It is *the Slide to the Turtles*. You both walk over to the side of the castle to an archway. It has three steps up to it. You walk up the steps while *Gene* is explaining that this is *the Slide to the Turtles*. The sides and the ceiling of the slide are made of sand, but the floor, the part you sit on, is made of shiny dark blue metal. *Gene* reminds you that you are safe and to enjoy the ride. As you go to sit down you start to get nervous, but then you hear *Gene's* words and at that moment you decide to relax and have some fun. Sitting down on the cool metal, you push off and away you fly. You are going just the right speed for you, not too fast, but not too slow. Wow, this is fun! And the ride is so long. (pause)

As it goes around another turn, you think you see the end coming so you get your feet ready and with a thump you make a perfect landing. Yes, that felt great! You look back up at the slide and realize how far down you must have come. You are wondering how to get back up when a large purple

turtle with a soft patchwork cover shell walks up and offers you a ride back up. You smile remembering *the Slide to the Turtles* and say "Sure I'll take a ride." When you sit down on the turtle's shell it is soft like a pillow with many different kinds of material sewn together. On the ride back up you think about how much fun it was to ride down the slide knowing that you were safe and you hoped that you would get to ride it again soon.

When you get to the top of the hill, Gene is waiting for you and tells you it is time for you to head back. You see your coat hanging on a hook, so you pick it up. As you start to walk across the playground back to the orange door, you turn around and wave goodbye. Gene and the purple turtle wave back. You smile to yourself and think, "That was fun!"

Closing:

Now I want you to put your hands back on your stomach below your bellybutton and take a deep breath in one, two, three... and out one, two, three. Raise your shoulders up towards your ears, hold it a second and release them slowly back down. Now slowly open your eyes and give your lap a gentle pat... pat...with both hands.

Discussion Helpers: (authentic discussion is recommended)

1. When you entered the playground what playground equipment did you run to?
2. What playground equipment did you and Gene use together?
3. Could you feel anything with your body... (playing on the equipment, Gene tagging you, hugging Gene belly, the cool glass, riding down the slide, or the turtle shell)?
4. What did the turtle look like or feel like? What color was the turtle?
5. By yourself you can visit Gene and the castle. When would be a good time of day to visit...(prompt only as needed: at night if you have trouble sleeping, waiting in line at the store, waiting at the doctor's office)?